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*A comprehensive resource  
for children with disabilities*

March 9, 2022

The Honorable Shane Pendergrass  
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Letter of Information on House Bill 1020 - Developmental Disabilities Administration – Self-Directed Services (Self-Direction Act of 2022)**

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

Kennedy Krieger Institute applauds Delegates Young and Delegate Proctor for their sponsorship of House Bill 1020 and for advocating for individuals with disabilities.

Kennedy Krieger's Neurodiversity at Work program takes a multi-faceted approach to hiring and retaining individuals of all abilities as part of the workforce. Neurodiversity at Work is a collective impact initiative designed to create and support gainful employment for individuals with disabilities, providing economic benefit for businesses and the larger community. The Neurodiversity at Work program fosters integrated workplace settings where all individuals can experience success and independence. Currently the program includes several specialty initiatives Project SEARCH, CORE Foundations a Developmental Disabilities Administration Licensed Agency, HR pathways hiring program, training and education services, legislative efforts, research, transition consultation services, and planning for a national conference and on-going events.

This legislation would require the Developmental Disabilities Administration to establish and provide training and guidance to coordinators of community service providers on the self-directed service model. The legislation would also expand the duties of support broker services.

Individuals with disabilities deserve to receive the supports they need in order to live, learn, work and thrive in the community. The Community Pathways waiver offers individuals a choice in the way they would like to receive services. In the traditional model, services are delivered through a certified/licensed adult service provider agency, utilizing eligible funds that are assigned to approved individuals through the Developmental Disabilities Administration. . In the self-directed model, individuals access their budgeted funds and can hire their own staff and/or a vendor to access services. An individual's ability to choose between the two models under the Community Pathways waiver program should remain an option.

A comprehension-training model is needed to improve understanding, awareness, and processes when accessing the self-directed service model. Coordinator of Community Services (CCS), support brokers, family members, caregivers, provider agencies, and individuals with disabilities will all benefit from increased training on self-directed services to improve the complex and lengthy process to obtain and maintain services through the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Coordinators of Community Services historically provided case management to individuals receiving services through the traditional service delivery model. In recent years, there has been an increase in individuals choosing the self-directed model with limited education provided to the professionals responsible for guiding

families, individuals with disabilities, and other members of the Person-Centered Plan, through the process. Accessing long-term services through the Developmental Disabilities Administration can be a daunting, lengthy, and a complex process that is often overwhelming for individuals with disabilities and their families. To better serve some of the most vulnerable Marylanders, we must have highly trained and educated case managers who can navigate options with individuals and their families for a successful completion of their funding plan. A well-trained workforce in both service models will promote the inclusion and choice we strive to maintain as a state through the person-centered planning model.

The support broker position has been in place to support individuals with disabilities receiving services through the self-directed model. Support brokers provide advocacy, advice on financial planning, act in the role of human resources, and goal tracking. The support broker role has recently undergone changes that reduce the number of budgeted hours they can support on each individual plan to maximum of 4 hours per month. The support broker role has undergone changes to a focus on providing human resource support, reducing their role in financial advisement. The Coordinators of Community Services role now includes supporting the person-centered planning team in the budgeting and planning process, which requires increased training. Support brokers have played a significant role, advising individuals receiving self-directed services and to maintain a level of quality care that each person deserves, we encourage increasing the available hours for support brokers.

Kennedy Krieger encourages the General Assembly to invest in a partnership with stakeholder groups to understand the educational needs to better implement self-directed services and increase access to more Marylanders. Furthermore, to adequately prepare families, caregivers, individuals with disabilities, and Coordinators of Community Services to utilize self-directed services there is a need to develop a comprehensive training model that breaks down the process so all stakeholders are able to understand.

Training will result in improved access to self-directed services for transitioning youth, individuals with a limited support team, and individuals from disadvantaged communities. Additionally, we recommend for any future state legislation on self-directed services to include designated funds for on-going training of direct support professionals and additional care personnel. Investing in self-directed services now, will increase access to services, improved policies and procedures, comprehensive person-centered plans, and a higher quality of the provision of services.

We deeply appreciate the efforts of the Committee.

Respectfully,



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